

Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

Volume 16 Number 7

Newsletter

July 2013

“Letting Kids be Kids: Balancing Safety with Opportunity for Foster Youth”

A subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee held a hearing titled “Letting Kids be Kids: Balancing Safety with Opportunity for Foster Youth.” Led by Chairman Dave Reichert (R-WA) of the Subcommittee on Human Resources, the hearing examined how the emphasis on the safety of children often deprives them of their sense of normalcy. Typical adolescent experiences such as participating in afterschool athletic programs, attending prom, acquiring a driver’s license, or gaining summer employment are extremely difficult for those in foster care.

Some states prohibit sports involvement because away games would cause the youth to be out past the curfew set by the state for youth in care. Others bar children from accompanying their foster family on vacation and, as a result, children are sent to respite care in the interim.

By holding this hearing, legislators signaled that they heard the desperate pleas of foster children seeking change. Representatives from state governments, non-profit organizations, and national foundations offered recommendations on how to fix the problems foster children face on a regular basis. One witness stated that the first step is to change the mindset of child welfare agents into shifting the emphasis from safety to permanency and normalcy. NCFA agrees that our first priority should be to find permanency for every child.

However, in the interim, we need laws that remove the numerous barriers to normalcy; practitioners must be able to promote opportunities that will allow children to participate fully in life and take advantage of the experiences that will help them have a sense of belonging and develop the special skills available through extra-curricular activities no matter who is caring for them at the time.

Despite the sentiments of skeptics, Congress will hopefully continue forward and find a way to bring normalcy to the foster youth of America.



Complete article found at: <http://www.adoptioncouncilblog.org/2013/05/advocates-educate-congress-on-lack-of.html>

To learn more about “Letting Kids be Kids– Promoting Normalcy in Foster Care” hearing go to: <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/32605721>

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Exploring the Land of Fairies!



On June 1st Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine hosted the first annual Exploring the Land of Fairies event at Mackworth Island in Falmouth! It was a beautiful sunny day for families to have a picnic and enjoy the beautiful scenery and beaches of the island. A dessert table with a variety of delicious baked goods was set up for families to enjoy. Thank you to Wicked Whoopies in Freeport, Isabella's Café and Bakery in Freeport and the other individuals who donated special treats!

Through out the day, kids made gnome hats and wands before they went off to explore the permanent fairy house village and build their very own fairy house! Along the trail to the fairy houses, families took part in a nature themed scavenger hunt with prizes and give aways at the end!

Thank you to Meghan Painton and the Life is Good Foundation as well as Heather Davis from The Telling Room in Portland for providing activities.

AFFM looks forward to seeing you all again next year at Mackworth Island!



FREE Fishing Licenses!

L.D. 717: An Act to Provide Free Fishing Licenses to Certain Children in the Custody of the Department of Health and Human Services



Resident 16 or 17 years of age in custody of the Department of Health and Human Services. A complimentary license to fish may be issued to any resident 16 or 17 years of age who is in the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services under Title 19-A, chapter 55 and Title 22, chapter 1071, upon application to the commissioner. This complimentary license remains valid for the duration of the Department of Health and Human Services' custody of the resident, if the license is not revoked or suspended.



Do you Know about the Citizens Review Panel?

The citizens Review Panels (CRP) is a group of citizen-volunteers who are federally mandated to conduct an evaluation of the state's child protective services agency. Every state has one, but they all operate very differently. In Maine, DHHS works collaboratively with Maine citizens to assess the policies and procedures that are carried out day to day by DHHS. The CRP's primary mission is to make recommendations or report findings based on results of those evaluations. These important volunteers are nominated by the executive board of the CRP group, and there are specific rules governing the make up the group and the number of people can be a part of the group at one time. The Maine CRP is made up of foster, adoptive, and kinship parents, program administrators from private agencies, a law enforcement official, guardian ad litem, former youth in care, and liaisons from DHHS.

I was fortunate enough to attend the National CRP conference in Wyoming this May. After listening and learning about the strengths and struggles that other States have, I can happily report that Maine is a leader in reducing barriers to achieving permanency, maintaining children's safety, and providing on-going support for the children who are either at risk or are currently in out of home placements. For example, did you know some states do not allow youth in foster care to stay in foster care system beyond their 18th birthday? Can you believe some states do not allow foster parents to have information about the child they are caring for? This includes not being allowed to attend school meetings, or to attend a medical appointment without the legal guardian present. How frustrating that must be for resource families.

On the other hand, compared to some states in my opinion, Maine still has a way to go. Maine should consider developing a better tracking system for identifying biological mothers who have previously lost multiple children to the system, but yet continue to have babies. Perhaps with a birth matching strategy, preventative actions steps can be put in place to monitor and assist with this type of parent's parenting before a child becomes at risk. I also think Maine should take advantage of using a realistic simulation shaken baby doll as a standardized teaching tool to help new mothers understand the dangers and more importantly the preventative strategies to avoid shaking a baby. Important to me, is developing comprehensive and hands-on independent living programs for youth in care. There are some states that have extensive independent living programs and have proven that this proactive approach has decreased a young person's need for State assistance later in life. One of the most ingenious strategies used by some states is helping resource families and youth understand the child welfare system is by hosting journey bus tours. This is a hands- on learning experience that enables attendees to get a better understanding of how each level of the DHHS system operates by physically seeing each DHHS department and by talking with those people in those departments. If Maine resource families and the youth understood the roles and "chain of command" of each DHHS department, perhaps this would lead to better communication and further strengthen the respect each have for each other.

Finally, what I was most impressed with and want to emphasize, DHHS personnel and the CRP group are much further along in their willingness and in their ability to work together than many other states. Both seem to truly respect each other's roles and work collaboratively by mutually creating new strategies to eliminate barriers and to achieve mutually shared goals that benefit all children and families involved in the child welfare system. I encourage all resource families and others to check out the two links below to get a more comprehensive understanding of what CRP groups are doing at both the State and National level.

Bette, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend a great conference.

Jim Hatch, Resource Family Specialist

<http://www.childabuseactionnetwork.com/Related-Panels/citizen-review-panel-30.html>

<http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/crp/>

Resource Family Support Groups Throughout Maine

Bangor: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets from 6:00-8:00pm the 3rd Monday of every month at 26 Downeast Circle (between Davis Road and Mt. Dessert Drive), Bangor. For more information please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 Please RSVP.

Biddeford: Foster/Adoptive Support. Meets from 9:30-11:00 am the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month. For more information please contact Meredith Crain at 283-4314. Please call before you come.

Brunswick: Please contact Tammy Cutchen at 208-0939. Tammy also runs the Clothing Garage; give her a call for either service.

Caribou: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship parent support. Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month at 5:30PM at Caribou Adult Education Building on Bennett Drive in between Caribou Rec and the gas station. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Dover-Foxcroft: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6PM-7:30PM at Mayo Regional Hospital, Borestone and Sebec conference room. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Ellsworth: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month from 5:30pm-7:00pm at Bryant E. Moore Community Center 238 State Street Room 108 in Ellsworth. Childcare is provided. Please contact Linda Levesque, Downeast Health Services, at 667-5304 or email llevesque@downeasthealth.org to reserve childcare. *Thanks to a local grant awarded to Downeast Health Services, AFFM is able to provide mileage more than 30 miles from home.*

Houlton: Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets the 1st Monday of the month at 7 Cow Team Road in Sherman. Please contact Debbie Irish at 365-7133 for more information. This group does not meet during the summer.

Houlton: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets every 2nd Thursday of the month from 5:30pm-7:30pm at Houlton CHCS 2 Water Street. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Lewiston: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets the 4th Tuesday of the month 7:00pm-9:00pm at B Street Community Center 57 Birch Street Lewiston, ME. Call Deb Hallowell at 783-3291 or 344-5101 or Lisa Cates at 336-3760.

Machias: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 1st Friday of the month 5:30PM-7:00PM at Rose M. Gaffney Elementary School 15 Rose Gaffney Road, Machias. Childcare is provided. Please contact Mindy Kane, Community Health and Counseling Services, at 263-2014 or email MKane@chcs-me.org to reserve a spot for childcare. *Thanks to a local grant awarded to CHCS, AFFM is able to provide mileage more than 30 miles from home.*

Skowhegan: The group meets 5:30-8:00PM every second Wednesday of the month located at Skowhegan Federated Church 13 Island Avenue in Skowhegan. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

South Paris: Kinship Support. Meets 9:00AM-10:00AM every second Saturday of the month, unless noted. Meets at Deering Memorial Church, 39 Main Street, South Paris. Please RSVP to Shelley Newcomb at comb2599@roadrunner.com

South Portland: Kinship support. Meets at 4:30PM-6:30PM at 62 Darling Ave, South Portland. This group will meet every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Please contact Meagan Stearns at meagan@affm.net or call (207) 478-8025 to reserve childcare.

Westbrook: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets 10:00AM-12PM at the Westbrook-Warren Congregational Church at 810 Main Street. Meets every 1st Wednesday of the month. Childcare is provided. Please contact Meagan Stearns at meagan@affm.net or call (207) 478-8025 to RSVP and reserve childcare.

York: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. This group will meet every 2nd Thursday of the month 5:30PM-6:30PM at York Hospital. Please use the Hancock Entrance, group will be held in Ellis Conference Room (on your immediate left). Please RSVP to Meagan Stearns at meagan@affm.net or call (207) 478-8025.

Childcare Volunteers Wanted for Support Groups!

"Childcare volunteers wanted-older teens encouraged to inquire"

AFFM is seeking volunteers to help with childcare during resource family support group meetings. (Meetings are typically held 1 time per month for two hours)

The need is Statewide. Volunteers can support AFFM in one of the following capacities:

1. There are several support groups providing childcare. AFFM is always looking for older teens and/or adults who would serve in a helper role alongside the lead childcare provider.
2. There are support groups who would like to offer a childcare option, but a childcare provider has not yet been identified for the area. AFFM is looking for adults who can take the lead childcare provider role.
3. AFFM is always looking to start new support groups. Even though a support group may not be in your area, AFFM wants to be able to identify people who are willing to help out with childcare when a new group is started.

AFFM will offer volunteer hours to meet the high school community service requirement. Volunteering in this capacity also looks great on a job resume and college entrance application.

All volunteer applicants will need to complete an informal screening process to ensure good fit. For adults, a DHHS background check may also be required.

For anyone interested, please call AFFM at 1-800-833-9786.

In Cumberland and York County, ask for Meagan. For all other counties, ask to speak with Jim.

6 Ways to Help Your Adoptive Children Make Themselves at Home

1. **Personalize some of their belongings by putting their names on things—backpacks, clothing and other items.**
2. **Give them something that is theirs only—not their siblings.**
3. **Frame a family photo for them to display as they choose.**
4. **Have them help with meal-planning, grocery shopping and mealtime.**
5. **Give them individual responsibilities.**
6. **Have one-on-one time with each child.**



Taken from: Foster Families Today Article March/April 2013

NFPA 43rd Education Conference

This year's National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) 43rd education conference, "Oceans of Opportunity...Catch a Wave to Permanence" was held June 5th-8th in Long Beach, California. Though the weather didn't live up to California standards, it was a great conference filled with amazing presenters, educational workshops, and an opportunity to hear from other states and learn of their challenges within the system and what is going well in their states.

The conference kicked off with keynote speaker, Judge Britt Hammond from Georgia. Judge Hammond provided an opening session that left attendees wanting more. He spoke of the importance of resource families and the incredible work they do for youth in care as well as the importance of having support in place. Judge Hammond currently holds positions of leadership within the Georgia Council of Juvenile Court Judges serving on the Permanency Planning, Education Certification and Delinquency Committees. He also serves as a consultant to the Supreme Court of Georgia's Committee on Justice for Children, managing Georgia's Title IV-E Court Order Improvement Project, Foster Parents Rights to Notice and be Heard Project, and I.C.P.C Improvement Project.

AFFM is hoping to bring Judge Britt Hammond to Maine for the 2014 spring conference, keep an eye out for more information! Make sure to check out www.nfpaonline.org for the next NFPA conference in Orlando, FL!

Kinship Corner

9 Things Kinship Caregivers Need

- 1. Resources:** Accessibility to resources in their community that can assist with basic needs; food, clothing, child care and other needs are absolutely critical for family stability.
- 2. Peer Support:** Being around other kinship families decreases the sense of isolation that many kinship families feel.
- 3. Parenting Support:** Kinship caregivers are typically parenting highly impacted children who have been exposed to multiple and/or chronic traumatic experiences. Parenting support that equips kinship caregivers with specialized interventions and to tools to effectively manage the increased emotional and behavioral challenges that many children with complex trauma manifest will empower kinship caregivers in their parenting style.
- 4. Help:** Learning to ask for help and being able to access specialized supportive services is critical.
- 5. Respect:** Kinship caregivers desire respect and acceptance like all other diverse family groups. Our most basic need as human beings is the need to belong; to feel we are amongst kin. Empowering kinship caregivers to actively advocate for their children's and family's needs certainly deserve our respect.
- 6. Understanding:** Assistance with grief and loss is key to healing and successful relationship building in kinship care.
- 7. Sense of Humor:** One of the most effective tools caregivers can use daily to de-stress their home is to laugh often and frequently. Incorporating playful rituals into the home environment will help to model and teach healthy coping strategies.
- 8. Empathy:** Kinship caregivers need to experience compassion and empathy from their support systems. Building bridges of support directly to the kinship family minimizes isolation and distress.
- 9. Community:** Community networks that welcome and celebrate the unique contributions that kinship caregivers are making throughout the nation become a powerful partner in helping to sustain kinship families.

Discount Card Challenge and Raffle!

Win a \$40 gift card!

Help AFFM increase the number of participating businesses in the AFFM Discount Card Program and win a \$40 gift card.

To participate in the drawing, all you need to do is get at least one business to agree to join the discount card program. For every additional business you get to join will get an extra chance to win!

When thinking of people to talk with, may want to think about discounts for: family activities, material goods, restaurants, contractor services, fee for service programs, legal services, auto repair, travel discounts. The list is endless...Think of discounts that you wished you could have and pursue to get them.

All you have to do is have that initial conversation with the potential business owner and encourage them to join. Get the business owner to agree to accept a call from AFFM to provide additional information about the program and how it could potentially help their business.

Call AFFM with a name and phone number with the contact person, and AFFM will do the rest. In the end, if the business agrees to join your name goes into the raffle.

Some helpful hints when talking with business owners:

1. Encourage business owner to visit www.affm.net, click on the “services” then to “discount card Program” for more information.
2. Sharing your personal story of how the discount card has helped you or would have help meet a particular need if the resource had been available. This goes a long way with business owners.
3. You could let them know that new participating businesses are acknowledged in the Family Ties newsletter that goes to over 4300 recipients throughout Maine, and the business is posted on the AFFM website.
4. Most of all, by providing a discount to the families of AFFM, the business is showing their support to the children of Maine, and the people committed to caring for them-meaning primarily YOU!



The winner will be drawn on Monday, September 30th.

AFFM recognizes that some geographical locations have very limited or in some case no business participation in the discount card program. AFFM wants to change that, by tapping into your knowledge of your local community and the connections you already may have that can join us in this effort.

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The North American Council on Adoptable Children
National Foster Parent Association

FAMILY TIES THE NEWSLETTER OF ADOPTIVE & FOSTER FAMILIES OF MAINE, INC PUBLISHED WITH
SUPPORT FROM THE MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES. PLEASE DIRECT COM-
MENTS TO: EDITOR, FAMIY TIES, AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE.

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Save the Dates:

August 13, 2013 join the Community Conversation at the University of Maine at Presque Isle to continue the on going dialogue on how to improve and increase the numbers of youth who achieve permanency.

9:30AM-2:00PM

August 24, 2013 join the Child and Family Services Resource Family Awareness Walk/Run to Benefit Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine and the Kinship Program

New Balance Road Race at the New Balance Factory Store on Walnut Street Skowhegan.

Race starts at 9:00A.M.

September 27, 2013 Day long training with Paula J. Lockhart, MD on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder at Jeff's Catering in Brewer 9:00AM-2:00PM

For more information about these events call 1-800-833-9786 or email info@affm.net